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Must Remain in
Transcription Room

M 2545

February 23, 1975

School Meeting

Land

Large meeting, Heh? Such interest in a school, maybe. We'll record this for future reference, if you want to. If you don't want to listen to it, it's all right. It stays the way it is. The reason for doing it because I've heard of a reputation that I usually talk in such a way to please everybody. When I have a private conversation then I agree with that person, and have a private conversation with someone else, I agree with that. And as a result I have had a name that I adapt myself very well to everybody and there is all the time a conflict of opinion of what I have said. So we'll do it, make it very clear. On the tape I can't lie. So if you don't remember what I said, listen to the tape.

It's obvious that there is an interest in the school. My feeling is at the present time that you still have to work out certain detail about agreeing on what you really want. I have the feeling from the two cassettes which I got, and for which I am very happy, because I got an impression what you were talking about, or at least a report on it, that you have many opinions and all in a good sense, I think, all well meaning but that ought to be straightened out on certain fundamentals before you can really get started. So perhaps, if it is possible, at this meeting we

might come to certain definitions of what you really want and if it is feasible, because it is quite right to talk about things which you would like and it is not possible to do. Partly you may not have money. Partly you don't have the people actually who are willing to volunteer.

Of course it's obvious and you have heard it several times that for me a principle of a school is a continuation of the family. That is a school that we would like to set up, or at least we're interested in, is that the parents run it. I would like to get straight on that one thing; the parents are running the school, not the trio, and certainly not me. It's entirely up to a discussion among you what is right for your own children. I have nothing to say about it, and don't get the misunderstanding about that, that I want to emphasize or that I want to be part of it or I want to be autocratic and all the rest. Forget it. We talk together for your sake and the children's sake, what is right and what you could do, what you can do, what is right for them.

And because of that, you have to agree, because you talk about several childrens--children coming from different homes and you can understand that each parent has his own idea what is necessary, not only for his child, but also perhaps for someone else's children. You will run into all kind of forms of discipline and disagreement, different behavior forms of the different children, and that they don't agree among themselves even, that sometimes maybe they become a little obnoxious and don't want to be disciplined, or that they know already their father or mother who is teaching

too well, and that they don't want to agree even with the father and mother.

You will run up against many, many difficulties which I think have to be straightened out with a very definite desire to to want do the right thing. And not to argue too much among yourselves. That means of course that at certain times you have to give in; at other times you have to insist when it is--when a principle is involved.

For instance, where will you have the school? I suggested originally, for one year, don't go to the Land. You're quite new in what you want to do; you don't really know exactly how the school might become. Use Occidental as a pied a terre, if that is feasible. Now disadvantages, but also the advantages, that it's a little closer home; you can adjust things easier and you don't consider it a permanent building or permanent a--organization in Occidental, because I do believe that the school belongs at the Land, and when you have had enough experience maybe you can consider to take it to the Land here. Also there are difficulties involved in that, not only distance but also facilities. Also, you have to consider local authorities, health, whatever there is. Naturally you have to consider the State regarding what is advisable, what is necessary for a--a private school. But, you see, all those things you have to agree on before you really start, and you have to look at it if you actually can afford it.

I think that parents should remain as much as possible, volunteers and teachers. If they are busily engaged in their own professional work, they probably can afford to spend a couple of hours teaching or to help at the school. If it is necessary for a person

to be there all the time, which sometimes is really required for continuity, then such a person should be paid, because there is no other means that such a person can earn a living in another way, and their devotion is totally to the school itself. And that you have to agree on, with each other. And it depends entirely what you can afford.

In the first place I think you have to keep it as simple as you can. You should start on a small scale. You should try out what you can do and add to it gradually what you think is necessary. That is why it can be like an experimental period in Occidental. Don't overload yourself with too high cost. Don't start organizing before you have anyone to organize with; you put the cart before the horse. The school starts because there are a few people who would like to start the school for their children. Even if there are four or five little children and two or three parents, it's already a good nucleus. Then you find out what are the principles that are involved and gradually you will have more and more volunteers for that. But it has to start as itself can start in a live condition, and it is not to be made as an organizational chart that you try to follow, because a chart is of course inadequate.

You don't know what you are going to be up against. I know what I am talking about because of experience, not only in Amity. I've taught myself, several years, and I come from a teaching family and education has been with me I would say almost practically all my life. And it is not that I want to insist on anything whatsoever. You do what you want to do. If you need any advice that you think I can give, I'm quite willing to give it, but I'm not

insisting on it. You straighten out your own affairs, and you go to it, and you fight as much as you wish, and you get into each other's hair and settle it. Come to definite conclusions and don't spend too much time in talking about things.

That's why I say start on a small scale if there is already that possibility. You don't have to teach all the children all at once. You start with a few, if you can, and you can add every week, but you have to have experience. How will you arrange your children into what kind of groups dependent on their age? How is it necessary to conform to requirements of the government? What do you have to do to teach? What will you start teaching with? The three R's, quite fundamentally, you must start with that. And in that section which we in Amity put always in the mornings, that is devoted to the three R's and discipline, because it has to be a school, and the little boys and girls who don't conform are being taught to discipline. It is difficult for some of the teachers, particularly when they have to handle their own child, because then they become a little bit prejudiced and maybe lean over backwards to want to spank it more in favor of someone else. But whatever that is, that isn't important.

I would suggest simply that the mornings are the real school. The afternoon you can embellish. You can go to town, whatever you want to teach: different languages or geography of history or any kind of a form of economics or handicraft, working with older people in whatever you want to teach them. But fundamentally there has to be a school that is a school that can be compared to a public school, because you don't want to waste the time of your children. You want

to make sure that they become equipped and that they really are can--could even compete with that what takes place in other schools. If you can keep that spirit going among yourself, if you can then define for the different parents whatever they can teach and want to teach, and then set up a schedule of how to arrange such a day for the children, and make allowances for who can and who cannot be there or whatever the difficulties are that of course you will meet in transportation or sometimes weather conditions like we have to meet in Amity, all of that has to be flexible.

The question is, do you want someone definitely responsible for the school, as it were the head teacher or the one who is representative of the school itself in relation to the outside world? What kind of teachers do we really want and how do we do it? Do we have people with enough licenses so that you can become legal? These things I don't know very much about because I don't know this school. But I think you have to consider such questions and check them off, one after the other.

Give each person a chance to talk about it, but let them be talking after they have thought about it quite sincerely themselves, so that you don't get all kind of nonsensical discussions which don't lead to anywhere at all. If you want to do it on that way, I think you are right. If you want to keep on being chaotic, excuse me for having that impression a little bit, then of course you will not get anywhere.

I don't know what we can do today. I just wanted to say what is my attitude and I really feel that you ought to figure it out completely for yourself and to see if you can star--stay within the

means that are there. Occidental will require a little more money than--than the--at the Land here, but at the same time there may be difficulties which other people cannot overcome, and you have to come to a generalization. But if you can keep to the principle of what a school really means and it is really very, very simple, then some of the parents can see what is happening and then maybe they can adapt themselves to the conditions that have been created, and perhaps you can remain flexible enough whenever you want to expand it.

If you have now any particular questions about that, not about personalities, not about the de--detail of the school itself, not how many books you should buy or whatever you should do for the environment of a school and painting it up and the building and so forth. That's all your affair. I have no particular interest in it. But I think you have to consider it, and in detail, and maybe someone should definitely take--take initiative about such things and hold you together. You cannot function I think with twenty people, just all having exactly the same kind of a voice. This kind of thing is organized in a certain way as I say very simply to start with, but with a very definite aim in mind that you want to agree on what you can do for the children to be educated in the right way.

If you want to do that on the basis of giving them a certain kind of information that comes from you yourself, as a person interested in Work, it is so much better. Don't allow people to teach who really are not interested in the ideas of Gurdjieff. That's the only question I think is still perhaps a little open. Let us be

completely firm about that. This school exists or could exist on the basis of the Group. The Group exists for a very definite aim. I've explained that the first evening I came here. I'm interested in that kind of continuation, the possibility of applying (door slams)...

MR. NYLAND: Who is it? Huh?

Someone: Liz Finn.

MR. NYLAND: Who went out?

Someone: Liz.

Someone Else: Liz.

Someone Else: Liz Finn.

MR. NYLAND: Who?

Someone: Elizabeth Finn.

MR. NYLAND: Elizabeth. She doesn't like it what we talk about?

Dotty Joos: I think she's upset about what you said about being a member of the Group.

MR. NYLAND: Ah. Well that's unfortunate. That happens to be the case. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. That means that the person has to be positive regarding the possibility of Work itself. We are not interested in engaging people who are not, and when it's unfortunate that one doesn't want to or cannot as yet make up one's mind, it is just too bad. I'm very strict about that. You must understand it. I have my reasons for it. Maybe she can be convinced, but she--she should not leave the--the room and slamming the door.

Is there anything you want to talk about, so ahead and talk.

Adeline Green: Mr. Nyland?

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

Adeline Green: What you say makes sense, but the thing that I don't understand is, well I see in myself a lack of being able to teach the principles of Gurdjieff...

MR. NYLAND: I'm not talking about principles of Gurdjieff being taught. I'm not saying that. I said of a person who teaches children should have a proper attitude towards Gurdjieff. We're not teaching Gurdjieff in this school. It's an ordinary school for ordinary affairs. But a teacher who is interested in Gurdjieff has a certain attitude towards children, which you cannot expect from an ordinary teacher who doesn't know anything about that kind of philosophy. So don't mix it up. I'm not talking about teaching Gurdjieff. I'm talking about a person who is interested in life and tries to find in life certain solutions by means of an Idea or a System that we are interested in as a group. That's all.

John Metz: Mr. Nyland.

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

John Metz: We talked about the possibility of sometime in the future, which is impractical now, it's premature in that we, the people who are interested now, are all in the group and all have an interest in Gurdjieff. But we have mentioned the possibility of, sometime in the future, if the thing works out, of opening it up to people in the town.

MR. NYLAND: At the present time, no.

John Metz: Well, there's no question at the present time. That it can't be.

MR. NYLAND: Good, so then don't let's talk about it. Who the Hell knows what's going to happen within six months? It is not the aim of this. The aim is for the group to be -- to be able to take care of their children. The aim is not to teach other people. We are limited in that sense. If later on there is a school of some kind and you want to invite someone to give a lecture on electrodynamics and so forth, it's okay with me. Let's stick to the simple things and don't mix it up with all kind of ideals which never will become true, in all probability they won't. We're not going to compete with the public school. We're just going to have a group and a school for the children of the parents in this group. We're not competing with Montessori or any of the Steiner outfits. They have their own aim.

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

Kathy Differding: I have a question about what you might say to the children if they wanted to know why we're forming a school.

MR. NYLAND: Oh, I would explain it to them, that we would like to have a group of children also who can work together and at the same time can learn, and that there are all different kind of opportunities are given for those children the same as in a regular school, and that there is that kind of a teaching and the emphasis is honor. That they will learn like every child perhaps has a desire to learn something. And there is no further explanation necessary for a child.

Kathy Differding: If they ask the difference, what...

MR. NYLAND: There is no difference. This time it's only limited

to certain people.

Kathy Differding: You know, I mean if they wonder why they don't go to the school in town, what, I'm interested in what...

MR. NYLAND: Well, then explain to them we have a good school here. I mean if I have a child and he wants to go to Yale or to Harvard, do I explain to him why he goes to one or the other? I simply say I think one is better than the other. After all, that's a parent's decision. A child will--will have to follow that which is best for him or her when the parents decide it and then they think about it. A child has no idea about it. A child is interested to have a group of other little children who are congenial. And of course, when there is the desire on the part of a child to learn he also wants to make sure that he can learn in this school. Well, we'll have to satisfy them.

Pat Murphy: Mr. Nyland?

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

Pat Murphy: We have two boys in the first and sixth grades. As I looked at the distribution I thought that, of ages, that it seemed that Gene was going to be too old and he was going to, uh, that all the children are quite a bit younger than he was, and he's also working part-time for the Construction Company, and we'd decided that it didn't appear to be practical to have Gene be in the school, whereas David is the same age as most of the children, and I wondered if you agree with that or do you think that...

MR. NYLAND: I agree. The question is, always consider the child, what he's like. And you cannot, in a little school like this, meet perhaps all the different necessities or demands required or

is needed for the child. And I would be as free as you want to be yourself, and not have any pressure that you should send any one of the children to a school even if you don't agree with the school. Don't do it. The school stands on its own feet. If it has a quality that really you think is useful for the children, do it. But if you feel that the school as yet, or whatever may be in the future, is not answering to that purpose, then either we can change it in some way that it might, or if you still coninue to disagree, send the child to wherever he or she has to be.

You will always have the trouble of divisions in ages. And you cannot make ten groups you know; you have to combine it. And sometimes you have to study a child who is maybe eight or ten years old, is not as good or perhaps better than someone else. And you will always have these difficulties in any kind of a school, those who are a little bit behind and those who are a little advanced. And the question will come up many times what will we do with the people who are quick, the little children who are already through with this and that and their little comrades are still sitting and studying about two plus two. That's a question that always will come up, comes up in any kind of a school. And you cannot make a general rule for it.

In a general way, I would say, the adaptation sometimes of a child to something that is alive and can continue to exist and inspire, is a very good indication for him to be there, even if that what is being taught may not be to his liking sometime, or sometimes he knows already, or sometimes is of very little use to him.

Those are the difficulties. There are children who are easily adaptable to what is being given and there are always children who are rambunctious, and how far that ought to go in the teaching of that form of discipline it becomes many times a definite pro-- blem and the child sometimes is a problem child. No, there's no objection to use your own judgment. I mean like this, that you can use your own judgment in not wanting to have anything to do with the school. But you should not be angry. All right?

Pat Murphy: Angry? I don't understand.

MR. NYLAND: She was angry. Slammed the door.

Pat Murphy: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. NYLAND: All right?

Bob Wachtel: Mr. Nyland?

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

Bob Wachtel: I've been, uh, using a certain attitude and set of ideals for raising my own children and I guess I would have those attitudes when I started dealing with other children more. Where does one draw the line?

MR. NYLAND: I think you draw the line -- drawing the line is by the majority of the parents. There are of course people who have a very special inclination of communicating to children something that this particular person is interested in, and it may not fit for the benefit of the variety of different children who are there. For instance, if you want to talk--teach electronics prematurely to a little child of ten years old, I think you're stupid, because it is nothing but the self satisfaction that you then want to teach

and you don't consider the child. I think it has to be settled. You can call that the parents' board, if you like, what kind of material do you give in addition to the three R's.

The three R's are fundamental for the discipline and education of any child. There is no getting away from it. You want to prepare a child for ordinary life. He has to know how to read, he has to know how to write, and he has to know how to figure things out. In addition to that, you can embellish their minds and their hearts with all kind of things. And there, I think, is a very wide range, depending entirely on the kind of a person who is teaching. Because if he can communicate enthusiasm when a little boy wants to use a hammer and to see how he can work in construction, this and that, or when there is a child wants to draw pictures or still lifes or work in a pottery or do things of that kind, all of that of course is to the good. But it has to be on the basis for each child that they don't run away from certain things, where it is necessary for them to know that they have to do it, even if it is a little difficult for me. But after, let's say in the afternoons or whenever, you can teach them Spanish, and you can teach them Catalan as a dialect and you can talk about the connection between Spain and Portugal and the Basque Country, I don't care.

Give them information in accordance with whatever they wish. And if you are sufficiently sensitive, on the part of the child, you must feed it. And then it becomes a question of what to do when it is in connection with the school, what to do with the continuation of the school and when the child comes home into the family. It's exactly on that kind of a basis I feel that this is right, because

with a continued continuity between the two, many times when the child goes to school, the parents don't know what is being taught even, and the child when it's a little closed up doesn't want to say it. In this way there is a possibility of really staying with your child and how the education of that child, even if it falls into the hands of someone else who is not the parent. And if there can be that kind of understanding, the child will benefit, without any question. The child will remain open and will continue to tell father and mother what they have been taught what this was and that was, and you can form a much better opinion when you are part of the school. I think that is obvious.

David Differding: Mr. Nyland?

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

David Differding: I don't know impressions you've gotten about our meetings, school meetings to this point, but I just wanted to say that I felt that we've had a lot of good discussions and a lot of real attempts to be open and listen to other peoples' points of view...

MR. NYLAND: I think you are right. I am of the same impression. But I feel that you ought to come to conclusions.

David Differding: Well, I agree. I think we talk too much too.

MR. NYLAND: That's right. That's all right.

David Differding: But in general, I really feel positive.

MR. NYLAND: Yeah, I am too, surely. Only I have said you are not there yet.

David Differding: That's right.

MR. NYLAND: Which is true. And if you can crystallize it out a little easier, even among the few, and then present that to some of the others, you probably will avoid certain arguments in public. It's all a matter of how you want to do it, but when one is enthusiastic about an idea, you talk about it all the time, and you become convincing, and you even convince yourself. I think it's quite right that you do talk, but don't waste too much time on it. You've been at this already for quite a number of months. You know that. And you almost make a replica of the government. Talk, talk, talk.

It's okay that you want clarity, but then concentrate on that wish of really becomming clear and not going through all kind of illusions, all kind of perspectives or thinking what you would like to be in the community as a school, as I say a little bit competing with the public--public system. It's all right, but I don't think it is particularly important. It's your children, that's important, your family, and it's that kind of a group that should be and it should remain alive, not deadened which many times happens when you send a child to a school and you don't know what the Hell they're talking about.

I don't think there's any particular reason to--to question the principle. I think you have to settle on what you can do within your means. That is really much more important. Where will you get the money? Where will you get the people to teach? Will they spare the time? Are they willing to be on time for a school, because it is not a parent affair. Then they becomes--they put on a cap and become a teacher. It's a different thing for them. I've said many

times the parents will learn more than the children. You will learn cooperation among each other and particularly when your children are involved, you become not only enthusiastic about it, also hot under the collar, sometimes a little angry. These are the things you will have to meet because they are ordinary human qualities, but I think when there is a willingness to want to come to certain conclusions, not to waste too much time in talking about it, but actually start. That's why I say start on a very simple basis and see what you're up against and then you will know, and when it starts to grow there will be more interest even.

Don't try to convince people who are half-way regarding the school. Start with a few who really want it and then the rest will follow you. You see what I mean. This is a very simple affair. We didn't start with a school of forty or fifty children which we have now practically. And when we look into the future we have about fourteen people pregnant.

Merrilee Murphy: Mr. Nyland?

MR. NYLAND: Yeah.

Merrilee Murphy: Ah, when it comes to, you know the number is, it's fine to say we can start with the few children that we're interested in, but if we're thinking about using the CYO facility that, that's a certain amount of rent and expenditure...

MR. NYLAND: No, the question is exactly what I mean. You have to consider all the different angles and become very practical about it. I think you will run up against finances quite often.

Merrilee Murphy: We already have.

MR. NYLAND: Sure.

Merrilee Murphy: And you know, how many children can we really realistically begin with?

MR. NYLAND: You cannot, you cannot make a general rule. In the beginning few people who want to come together on a volunteer basis and it may mean a little sacrifice for one, a little bit more than someone else, but it all depends if one can agree on a particular aim and the enthusiasm for it. Some people have an attitude that they want to maintain it and help it and another will have an attitude that it is good when it is there and then I come in and want to use it. You see you have all kind of different opinions about it, but you have to be very clear and sometimes a little clever. Don't overload yourself in the beginning. You can't afford it. It's the same way I want to build a house and I spend fifty thousand dollars and there is a mortgage on it. It's going to cost me in years probably twice as much as I have now to invest because interest rate. That is it's obvious. These things are just simple and common sense will help you. It's never good for an idealist to live by himself. No, but that's right.

What I would like you to do, have a good meeting after I've gone. Just set down point by point, different salient affairs that really have concern and see what the situation is when you can talk quietly, after having thought enough about it for yourself and your requirements also for your children, what you feel is right, and what could be done and what is within the means of doing it. And then if you want to, I would like to hear about such simplicity, but not with an idea that I say yes or no on it. Again I ask you, forget about that. I don't want to say anything about anything, of even approbation, when you yourself are convinced that there is

something that you want to do, within the limitations which I have said, of the group. That is all. But for the rest, you must work out your own salvation. I'll help you as much as I can if you want it. But I don't intrude on it. In Amity I let them run the school. Every once in a while they ask me to come to a meeting, and I would almost say if I can get out of it I don't go. Well I can always excuse it that I have too much to do, you know, no time for it. But you have a variety of different people, different kind of ideas, different abilities. I think you're very fortunate to have all of that, that you can talk from different viewpoints and that you all wish to find out what is the best for the group of children as a whole. And then you can, must and come--can come to certain conclusions, a little give and take here and there. It's always that way in the world, and it cannot be avoided because people are different as types and the children are different and this is an idea which is also a little different. But the adaptability or the willingness to find out what someone else means and not to sit selfishly on your own throne. It does not work. It never works even in the world. They throw them out, as you know, gradually. That is the condition of the Earth when it becomes overgrown, that then a few people take on the authority. It will stop. It cannot continue to exist because that's a re--a result of the culture. Nature is not that way. Nature will fight, but certainly there is not one person who is naturally, let's say, one big tree who is the king of all of them.

All right. Will you do that, because there's no particular reason to -- to blather and blather any further. All right? Yeah?

I'm glad if you--if you know what I mean and what I hope for all of you, because I sincerely hope for that. This is something that is very, very much worthwhile. Don't get worried about the word activity. Activity is anything that is being done with which you are busy. And don't think about the trio, because they don't know anything about education. All that the trio is for is to help, to give advice, to see if you are to some extent within the means of the group as a whole or the fund if you would need some money. And you better be on their right side, but don't--don't think that they are in authority. It is the school group that runs this and if you want a meeting at a certain time, you have it at that time, and nobody has anything to say about it than the parents. I want to make that very clear because there are limitations to what we call the authority of the trio, exactly the same way as there are limitations to me. I don't want to interfere with any particular process that can take place, mostly I hope, spontaneously. It is sinful to stop it, because there's a tremendous amount of life involved that comes out, even if it needs direction, the function is that life becomes expressed. And that's what I feel with the school. It has to have life. If it can be a living school you will profit by it tremendously. Many schools, as you know yourself, are quite, quite dead. So will we leave it at that? All right? Good-bye. I'm glad you could come.

Everyone: Thank you, Mr. Nyland.

TAPE ENDS